

UNCLASSIFIEDAEC 125/23June 17, 1955COPY NO. 18ATCMIC ENERGY COMMISSIONCOMMITMENTS TO MARSHALL ISLANDERSNote by the Secretary

The attached letter to the Secretary of the Interior, with enclosures, is circulated for the information of the Commission.

W. B. McCOOL

Secretary

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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

June 8, 1955

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am enclosing herewith a copy of a letter which I have addressed to Assistant Secretary of State David McK. Key*, setting forth data concerning the fulfilment of U.S. Government commitments to the Marshall Islanders adversely affected by the nuclear experiments in the Pacific. A copy of the Commission's letter of December 2, 1954 to Secretary Dulles on this subject was furnished you.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Chairman

Enclosure

Ltr from Strauss to Key

The Honorable Douglas McKay
The Secretary of Interior

*Similar letter sent to Secretary of Defense.

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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

June 8, 1955

Dear Mr. Key:

In your letter of May 2, 1955* you asked the Commission to advise the Department of State of any data additional to that provided in our letter of December 2, 1954** regarding steps taken to fulfil the U. S. Government's commitments to the Marshall Islanders adversely affected by the March 1, 1954 nuclear weapons test in order that the U. S. Delegation to the Sixteenth Session of the U. N. Trusteeship Council can give a full and satisfactory report on the subject.

As you know, the Commission's letter of December 2 to Secretary Dulles outlined in some detail the status of several major programs being undertaken to assist the Marshall Islanders. Since that time the Commission has constructed a radio transmitter and receiver on Uliga Island in Majuro Atoll and a radio transmitter and receiver, six family units and two storage buildings at Jabor Island in Jaluit Atoll. It was also originally planned to erect a radio transmitter and receiving station as well as build a storage house and repair two others on Kili Island. It was later determined by the High Commissioner, however, that there was no longer a need for a Kili radio station. Construction and repair of the storage houses on Kili Island was not undertaken by the Commission because adverse weather conditions did not permit landing of material and personnel on the Island. The material for this construction was left on Jaluit, and we understand that the Government of the Trust Territories now feels that there would be definite advantages to having Kili inhabitants construct the buildings themselves.

In January 1955, the Commission conducted a radiological survey of Rongelap Island and examined soil samples, crabs, shellfish and foodfish, and such edible flora as coconuts, pandanus and arrowroot. In our letter of December 2, the Commission stated it was our view that the residual level of radioactivity would decay to insignificance allowing the resettlement of the natives on their home island by May 1955. This has not been possible, however, because the shellfish and crabs, which constitute an important part of the natives' diet, still contain unsafe amounts of radioactivity. Furthermore, the northern islands of the Atoll are still sufficiently radioactive so that persons living on them would receive radiation exposures somewhat above those recommended by the National Committee on Radiation Protection and the International Commission on Radiological Protection. I am attaching for your further information on this point copies of letters exchanged by the Deputy High Commissioner of the Trust Territories and the General Manager of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Secretariat Notes: *Circulated as AEC 125/19.

**Circulated as AEC 125/15.

Enclosed for Mr. Key
H. J. Key
A. J. Key
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As you know, the Commission has accepted the responsibility for periodically examining the Rongelap natives as a routine precautionary measure. In March 1955 a second medical recheck was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Eugene P. Cronkite of the Commission's Brookhaven National Laboratory, accompanied by Lt. Cmdr. Samuel D. McPherson, an ophthalmologist presently on duty at the Naval Medical Hospital at Bethesda, and Dr. Charles L. Dunham, Deputy Director of the Commission's Division of Biology and Medicine. The survey team found that the Rongelapians are in excellent general health with the exception of a few individuals suffering from chronic diseases which were present prior to March 1, 1954 and unrelated to the fallout incident. All individuals' white blood counts fall within the normal range, although the mean for the entire group is somewhat below that of the control population. All skin lesions have healed. Dr. McPherson, at the request of the native ophthalmologist, performed a number of cataract operations. None of the cataracts, however, were related to the effects of the March 1, 1954 fallout.

It was also pointed out in our earlier letter that the Commission, in cooperation with the Trust Territory and the University of Hawaii, was investigating the possibility of undertaking certain agricultural programs to increase food production for the Marshall Islanders. The Commission has offered to assist the Government of the Trust Territories in any way possible in researches directed toward crop improvement in the Marshall Islands, but, thus far, no specific request has been received by the Commission for assistance.

For your information I am attaching a list of the major categories of expenditures incurred by the Commission for the various activities covered in this letter. In addition to these, we understand the Commander, Joint Task Force-7 will have expended \$133,203 by June 30, 1955 for rehabilitation of the Marshallese, \$50,365 of which was reimbursed to the Commission for construction of housing on Ejit Island in the Majuro Atoll for the temporary resettlement of the Rongelapians.

I hope the information set forth in this letter will assist the Department in preparing its report for presentation at the Trusteeship Council this month.

I have taken the liberty of sending copies of this letter to Secretary Wilson and Secretary McKay.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Lewis L. Strauss
Chairman

Enclosures

Mr. David McK. Key
Assistant Secretary
Department of State

Department of Energy
Historical Office
RECORDS

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AEC EXPENDITURES INCIDENT TO NATIVE REHABILITATION -
OPERATION CASTLE

1. September 1954 Medical Re-examination	\$9,840	
2. January 1955 Radiological Survey	3,300	
3. March 1955 Medical Re-examination	<u>13,000</u>	<u>\$26,140</u>
4. Construction of Facilities on Uliga and Jabor Islands approximately		<u>\$58,000</u>
Total expenses through June 30, 1955 (app.)		\$84,140